

# News Release

# Senator Pete V. Domenici

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## DOMENICI, ALARMED BY ESCALATION IN CERRO GRANDE FIRE, VERIFIES FEDERAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO BATTLE BLAZE

WASHINGTON -- Sharing New Mexico's alarm about the growing intensity of the so-called Cerro Grande fire in northern New Mexico, U.S. Senator Pete Domenici today verified that federal resources are available to combat the blaze that has forced the evacuation of the entire city of Los Alamos.

Domenici today received personal assurances from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) administrator James Lee Witt and officials with the U.S. Forest Service and Department of Energy that all necessary federal resources are being deployed to help fight the week-old fire, provide for the safety of evacuated citizens, and ensure the protection of the Los Alamos National Laboratory.

The Senator also today discussed the disaster and firefighting needs with Gov. Gary Johnson, as well as Los Alamos city, county and fire officials. Dr. John Browne, LANL director, and other lab personnel have briefed Domenici on LANL safety measures, reporting that there is no potential for a radiation release and that all lab explosives have been secured.

"All the resources we can muster to fight this disastrous fire are available, but we need to pray and hope that conditions improve so that they can all be used to defeat this fire. I have been assured that federal resources are available by FEMA's James Lee Witt and the head of the Forest Service in New Mexico and people on the ground in Los Alamos," Domenici said.

Witt informed Domenici that FEMA personnel have been deployed to the Los Alamos area and that today's request for a presidential emergency declaration from Gov. Johnson clears the way for FEMA resources to be utilized in the area.

"Mr. Witt assured me that FEMA has the money and resources needed to aid in the evacuation, sheltering and recovery activities associated with the fire," Domenici said. "I also understand that federal firefighting resources have been poured into the area, but that the harsh wind conditions are limiting their use today."

"I am ready to do what I can to help defeat this disastrous fire, and will want answers as to why a so-called controlled burn got so out of control. This fire should serve as an example to everyone about how desperately dry New Mexico is right now, and how we should all—even government agencies—use extreme caution until the rains again fall on us."

“If we find there is a need for more federal resources in the recovery effort after this is over, we will get that done. FEMA has resources and Congress has always been ready to do the right thing following a disaster,” he said.